

An Attalid Overstrike and its Implications

Andrew Meadows*

Summary

This note publishes a new overstrike of an Attalid coin of Pergamum on a Seleucid coin of Antioch. It explores the chronological implications of this, and argues that the overstrike supports a date for the introduction of the cistophoric coinage in the 160s. The implications for other coinages are also explored.

Cette note publie une nouvelle surfrappe d'une pièce attalide de Pergame sur une pièce séleucide d'Antioche. Elle en explore les implications chronologiques et soutient que la surfrappe confirme l'introduction du monnayage cistophorique dans les années 160. Les implications pour d'autres monnaies sont également explorées.

Keywords

Attalid. Cistophorus. Eumenes II. Pergamum. Overstrike.

Attalide. Cistophore. Eumène II. Pergame. Surfrappe.

In March 2014, the Roma auction house astutely recognized and offered for sale a remarkable overstruck coin (Fig. 1).¹ The catalogue text made clear the interest of the coin.

'Mysia, King of Pergamon. Eumenes II AR Tetradrachm. Circa 241-197 BC. Laureate head of Philetairos right / Athena seated to left, left elbow resting on shield, crowning ΦΙΛΕΤΑΙΡΟΥ with wreath; bow behind. SNG France -; BMC -; SNG Copenhagen -; Westermark -, cf. Group VII (V.CLIII-R.1). 16.67g, 37mm, 1h.

About Extremely Fine. Apparently unpublished in the standard references without monograms or controls.

From the Gutekunst Collection.

Interestingly, this coin is overstruck on a tetradrachm of Antiochos IV 175-164 with seated Zeus reverse (cf. *SC* 1396-1397 dated 173/2-169/8 BC circa or *SC* 1398-1400 dated 168-164 BC); the following traces of the undertype are visible on the reverse: letters TH-E-O-Y on Athena's shoulder; folds of Zeus' himation on Athena's face; and leg of Zeus' throne on Athena's right arm.'

The purpose of the following discussion is to explore the chronological significance of this overstrike.

* New College, Oxford. OX1 3BN. United Kingdom

¹ Roma Numismatics Ltd 7, 2014, lot 675. The coin had in fact been previously offered for sale in Gorny & Mosch 207, 2012, lot 283, but the overstrike not recognized.



Fig. 1. Roma Numismatics Ltd 7, 2014, lot 675

1. Under-type

The under-type, as noted by the cataloguers at Roma, belongs to a coin of Antiochus IV. Traces of the design of the under-type are visible on the reverse, at an orientation of almost exactly 180° to the over-type. On the left shoulder of Athena can be seen the traces of the ‘Θ’, ‘Ε’, ‘Ο’ and ‘Υ’ of ΘΕΟΥ. Diagonally across Athena’s face runs the line created by the drapery of Zeus’ *himation* as it falls towards his foremost foot. Across Athena’s outstretched right arm, at the shoulder, are the remains of the front leg of Zeus’ throne. Further traces of legend are visible in the outer left field. Here the only identifiable element seems to be the trace of diagonal running beneath the die-break between the Ι and Λ of ΦΙΛΕΤΑΙΡΟΥ. This appears to be in the correct position to be the remains of the X of ANTIOXΟΥ.

As the Roma cataloguer noted, the under-type could potentially be one of a number of types of the mint of Antioch:²

SC 1396-1397 with legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ | ANTIOXΟΥ || ΘΕΟΥ | ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ

SC 1398-1400 with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ | ANTIOXΟΥ || ΘΕΟΥ | ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ || ΝΙΚΗΦΟΡΟΥ

Which of these it might have been is difficult at first glance to determine. However, one distinctive feature that can be noted is the clear visibility of the front leg of Zeus’s throne and the way that the drapery seems to curve down from the intersection of the leg with the seat. On many of the reverse dies illustrated by Mørholm (1963) and Le Rider (1999) for Antioch, the leg is in fact concealed behind the drapery.³ The most obvious exception occurs on Le Rider’s P127, where the throne-leg is very prominent (Fig 2.).

² Strictly speaking one should note also that coins of similar types and legends produced at the mint of Ptolemais-Ake: SC 1476 with ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ | ANTIOXΟΥ || ΘΕΟΥ | ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ | ΝΙΚΗΦΟΡΟΥ. However, these can be ruled out as potential under-types: see following note.

³ The illustration of the front leg of the throne is, in fact, much more common on the reverse dies used at Ptolemais. However, here the design tends to be more cramped, partly as a result of the decision to place three lines of legend in right field.



Fig 2. Reverse of tetradrachm of Antiochus IV, struck from P127 (Paris, Armand-Valton 492)

Overlaying of the images of the example struck from this die in Paris on the overstruck coin reveals that these certainly could, in fact, be the same die (Figs 3-6). If they are not, they are extremely close and seem likely to be the product of the same engraver.



Figs. 3-6. Reverse of BnF, Armand-Valton 492 overlaid on Roma 7, 675

The under-type, an example of SC 1397, thus comes from Antioch Series II. The chronology of this series has been discussed at length by Newell, Mørkholm, Le Rider and Houghton and Lorber.⁴ Although Newell had proposed a date-range of c. 169-167, Mørkholm, followed by Le Rider, raised those dates slightly to 173/2 to 169/8 BC, and this has been followed by the

⁴ NEWELL 1918, p. 16-32; MØRKHOLM 1963, p. 34-37; LE RIDER 1999, p. 223-4; SC II.1 p. 61-2

authors of *Seleucid Coins*.⁵ This date-range thus serves as a *terminus post quem* for the Attalid overtype.

2. Overtypes

As the Roma cataloguer noted, the overtype is a Philetairos issue of Westermarck (1961)'s Group VII, and was struck from her die V153. Like the single specimen struck from this die known to Westermarck, the reverse of the new coin bears no control mark, although it is struck from a different reverse die. Lacking a control, this coin cannot straightforwardly be situated within the sequence of Group VII proposed by Westermarck. Westermarck simply placed the product of two obverse dies (V153 and 154) known to her that were used with non-control-marked reverses at the very end of her sequence without comment. That they cannot belong there was demonstrated by Nicolet-Pierre, who drew attention to a marked stylistic dichotomy in the treatment of Athena on the reverse across the whole of Group VII: 'le détail le plus frappant étant le bouclier, tantôt figuré de trois-quarts et assez bombé, tantôt au contraire de profil et presque plat'.⁶ The style of rounded shield seems to continue similar treatment in Group VI, while Nicolet-Pierre was able to demonstrate from the evidence of wear within the Babylon hoard that the profile shield falls at the end of Series VII. Both of the reverse dies that were used with V153 are of the earlier rounded-shield variety. Thus, it seems impossible simply to dump them at the end of Group VII; but where do they belong?

Nicolet-Pierre saw the problem of style and moved both of the dies used with uncontrolled reverses towards the beginning of Group VII in her re-arrangement of the series. These became her issue 7 ('sans marque'). There is in fact a slight risk in taking this approach, since it is unclear that these unmarked coins constitute a single 'issue', but by assuming that they were, Nicolet-Pierre was able to construct a small die-chain involving her issue 7, which shares obverse die 154 with her issues 8 (Thyrsus + ΑΣ) and 9 (Star + Φ). The last of these issues links further to Westermarck's V145 and a new die from the Trabzon hoard.⁷

The question then arises of where in the overall sequence this small die-chain of linked issues 7-9 belongs. Nicolet-Pierre chose to place it relatively early in her sequence, after the rather poorly attested early issues of the Group (issues 1-6). In my 2013 study I proposed a revision of the order of issues laid out by Nicolet-Pierre, largely on the basis of new hoard evidence, but also in the light of a reconsideration of the structure of the series and stylistic issues.

A key piece of this hoard evidence is provided by the Syria 1990 hoard (CH 8.434). This contained very fresh example of six issues, including Nicolet-Pierre's 9 (star + Φ), which seemed otherwise to belong consecutively in the middle of Nicolet-Pierre's sequence (her issues 14, 15 and 16, plus two new issues clearly related to her 16, which I have termed 16a and 16b). This suggested the possibility of moving the chain formed by issues 7, 8 and 9 later in the sequence might be justified. Further support for this movement comes in the appearance on issue 8 of a Thyrsus control mark. This otherwise does not occur until Nicolet-Pierre's issue 18, which seems, along with her issue 24, to mark the transition point from the first (rounded shield) reverse style to the second (profile shield).

⁵ The type may now be consulted online at <http://numismatics.org/sco/id/sc.1.1397>.

⁶ NICOLET-PIERRE 1989, p. 207.

⁷ See NICOLET-PIERRE 1989, p. 213, Table 3.

Thus, by moving the chain of issues 7-9 to follow the large Styli group (issues 10-17) that was represented in the same hoard as issue 9, and re-ordering the issues within this small chain to give the sequence 9, 7 and 8, it was possible to insert this group as a transitional period between the long Styli group and the Thyrsus group of issues. This is the presentation of Group VII that I produced in 2013, and is reproduced here as Fig. 7.⁸

	<i>Issue</i>	<i>Westermarck</i> ⁹	<i>Hoards</i> ¹⁰	<i>Kleiner-Noe</i>	<i>Eumenes</i> ¹¹
0a	Styli + C	N1, N2, N3	P, T		
0b	Styli + D	N3			
1-2	Styli + MI/E	N3, 135-137	P		
2a	Styli + M	137			
3	Torch + M	138-139			
3a	Styli + F	N4			
4	Torch + G	141			
5	Torch + H	140	U		
5a	Palm + Π	140	M		
6	Palm + H	N5			
10	Styli + I	N6, 142-144	B, M		
11	Styli + A	146	B		
12	Styli + Φ	146-147	B		
13	Styli + AP	147			x
14	Styli + AΣ	147-148, 151	S, AM		
15	Styli + ΣΩ	148-149, N7	S, M		
16	Styli + AΣK	148, 150, 151	S		
16a	Styli + AΣ	N7	S		
16b	Styli + AΣΩ	148	S		
17	Styli + AΣK	N8			
9	Star + Φ	154, 145, N9	S		
7	No mark	153-154			
8	Thyrsus + AΣ	154	B		
18, 24	Thyrsus + ΔI	152, 129-130	B		?
19	Thyrsus + AΣ	152	T, M	1a	
23	Dolphin + ΠΦ	N10	T		
25	Dolphin + AΣ	N11, N12	T	3	
22	Cornucopia + HM	133			
22a	Cornucopia + AB?	133			
20	Dolphin + F/MA	134, N13		23c	
21	Thyrsus + J/ΔA	132-133, N14	AM	24e	?

Fig. 7. Proposed sequence of Pergamene issues (from MEADOWS 2013)

⁸ It originally appeared as MEADOWS 2013, p. 166, Table 5.6.

⁹ Dies prefixed 'N' were unknown to WESTERMARK 1961.

¹⁰ P = Pamphylia 1977 (CH 9.294); U = Urfa (IGCH 1772); B = Babylon (IGCH 1774); S = Syria 1990 (CH 8.434); AM = Asia Minor 1962 (IGCH 1453); T = Trabzon (IGCH 1373; CH 9.530); M = Ma'Aret en-Numan (CH 9.511).

¹¹ Portrait tetradrachms of Eumenes II. See below, section 4.

In fact, one can find further confirmation of this reconstruction by considering the style of V153 within the remainder of Group VII. Westermarck's V143-4 (used for Nicolet-Pierre's issue 10, a Styliis issue) perhaps bear the closest resemblance to V153 in their treatment of the locks at the rear of the head on the neck below the diadem. On the other hand, V148 (used for issues 14, 15, 16 and 16b, all Styliis issues and present in the Syria hoard) bears the closest resemblance to V153 in terms of the cowlick at the top front of the forehead and other features of the treatment of the hair (see Fig. 9). Indeed, V148 might be from the same hand as V153. Moreover, both of the reverse dies employed with V153 display a marked exuberance in their application of serifs to the letters of the legend. This feature finds its closest analogue among the reverse dies of Group VII in those used with V148 (see Fig. 10).

Hoards and style thus strongly suggest that V153 belongs, broadly speaking, with series 14-16. In my 2013 study, relying in particular on the evidence of the Syria 1990 hoard and Ma'Aret en-Numan (CH 9.511) hoards, I suggested that the Styliis series must have been struck by c. 162 BC, the deposit date of the latter hoard. The issues that followed, which include the important Thyrsus series, seemed to have been struck sometime between the deposit of the Syria 1990 hoard and Ma'Aret en-Numan hoards (c. 160 and 162 BC respectively), and the Babylon (IGCH 1774) and Trabzon (IGCH 1373; CH 9.530) hoards (c. 155 and 150 BC).¹²

3. Chronological implications for Philetairos Group VII

While the hoard evidence can provide *termini ante quos* for the production of a coinage, *termini post quos* are more difficult to determine. In this respect the new overstrike is of huge importance. Since the under-type was struck at the earliest in 173/2 and at the latest in 169/8, we now have a *terminus post quem* of those dates for the post-Styliis issues. These issues include, as has been noted, the Thyrsus issues for which the overstrike, combined with the hoard evidence would suggest a very broad date range of c. 173/2-169/8 to c. 150 BC. This conforms very comfortably to the chronology for the Philetairoi that I suggested on the basis of the hoard evidence alone. We may summarise this in a tabular form (Fig. 8).

Group A	Issues 0-2	By c. 175 (Pamphylia 1977 hoard)
Group B	Issues 3-17, 9 and 7	c. 175-160 BC (Syria 1990 and Ma'Aret en-Numan)
Overstrike (post 173/2-169/8BC)		
Group C	Issues 8, 18,24	c. 160-155 BC (Babylon hoard)
Group D	Issues 19-23	c. 155-150 BC (Asia Minor, Trabzon hoards)

Fig. 8. Hoard evidence for Philetairos Group VII and the new overstrike

In summary, the hoard evidence suggests that the Seleucid coin was overstruck somewhere between the year of its production and 9-13 years later. Certainly, the new overstrike requires that the end of Group B must have been produced after 173-168 BC, and that Groups C and D, essentially the 'Thyrsus' groups, were struck after that.

4. Chronological implications for other coinages.

The first implication that must be noted applies to the early issues of *cistophori*. As has long been clear, the first issues produced by the Pergamene mint share controls with the last of the

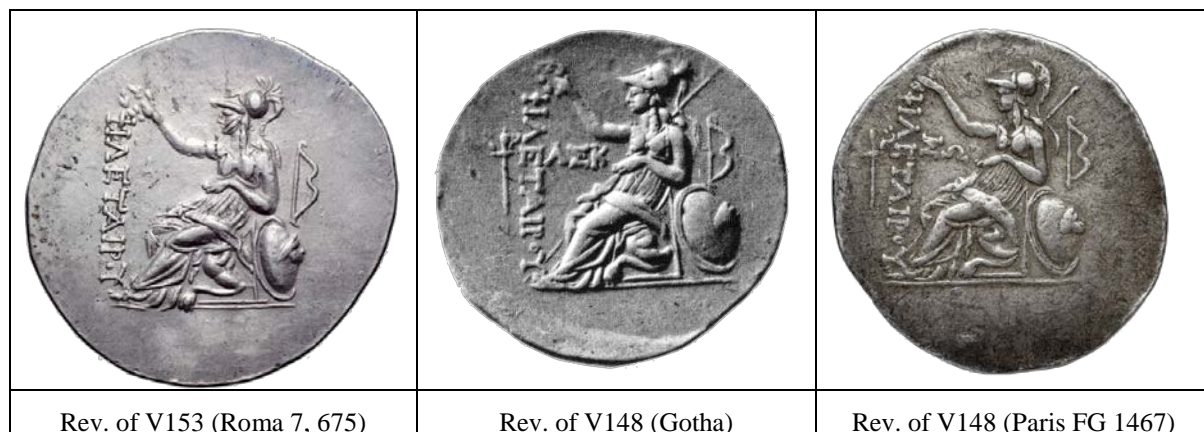
¹² For full discussion see MEADOWS 2013, p. 164-9.

Philetairoi, in such a manner that a period of parallel production seems likely. This parallelism seems to begin during the Thyrsus-period of control, with issue 19 (marked Thyrsus + $\overline{\text{A}\Sigma}$).¹³ That is to say that the beginning of the *cistophori* coincides with Group D in Fig. 8. As we have seen, the new overstrike suggests that the whole Thyrsus period of production at the Pergamene mint (Groups C and D) belongs after the years 173/2-169/8 BC. This implies that the issue of the first *cistophori* should also postdate these years. It thus provides powerful confirmation of the likely start-date of 166 BC first argued for by Kleiner and Noe, and further supported in Meadows 2013.¹⁴ It certainly rules out the high dates in the 180s, or even earlier that have been suggested by others.

Finally we might note that Nicolet-Pierre's issue 14, part of Group B above, also shares a control mark (Stylis + AP) with the portrait issues of Eumenes. Issue 14, as we have noted above, was struck partly from Westermarck's V148, which may be from the same hand as the die that produced our overstrike. As a consequence, it is highly unlikely that issue 14 and the portrait coins belong much before 173/2, and it is entirely possible that they belong after 169/8 BC. The date of c. 166-162 BC that I argued for in 2013 still seems entirely plausible.¹⁵



Fig. 9. Obverse dies compared



¹³ NICOLET-PIERRE 1989 issue 19 for Group VII, and KLEINER and NOE 1977 issue 1a for the *cistophori*. See Fig. 7.

¹⁴ For full discussion on the basis of the most recent hoard evidence see MEADOWS 2013, p. 175-181. For an overview of the debate and earlier scholarship, arriving at a date shortly before 190 BC, see Marcellesi 2012, p. 132-45.

¹⁵ MEADOWS 2013, p. 173-4. Certainly the much earlier date in the 190s recently suggested by MARCELLESI 2017 seems to be decisively ruled out.

Fig. 10. Reverse dies compared

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